

Message Text

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:WNHOWELL:PDW
APPROVED BY NEA:HHAUNDERS
S/S-O:JTHYDEN
NEA:MDRAPER
P:DNEWSOM (SUBS)

-----036135 310326Z /66

O 310216Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
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AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, PINS, LE, SY, IS

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SUBJECT: LEBANON SITUATION

1. ACTION ADDRESSEES SHOULD SEEK EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY TO
DISCUSS OUR CONCERNS REGARDING DETERIORATING SITUATION IN
LEBANON WITH APPROPRIATE HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. WE
HOPE THEY WILL USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH SYRIA TO HELP
BRING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE IMMEDIATELY AND AN END TO SERIES

OF CONFRONTATIONS, BOTH FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS AND IN ORDER TO FORESTALL ESCALATION INVOLVING ISRAEL.

2. IN APPROACHING HOST GOVERNMENTS, POSTS SHOULD MAKE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- USG IS CONCERNED OVER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON AND SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION IN SECURITY SITUATION. THESE CLEARLY CARRY POSSIBILITY OF WIDER CONFLICT. CLASHES LAST WEEKEND BETWEEN SYRIAN ADF FORCES AND MARONITE MILITIAS IN THE NORTHERN PART OF MOUNT LEBANON WERE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS. THESE INCIDENTS REPRESENT GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENSION OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN SYRIANS AND MARONITES AND HAVE RESULTED IN SYRIAN MILITARY OPERATIONS WITHIN TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN MOUNT LEBANON HEARTLAND.

-- IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT MARONITE PROVOCATIONS WERE INVOLVED IN UNFOLDING EVENTS, BUT SUBSEQUENT SYRIAN OPERATION COULD BE INTERPRETED AS EFFORT TO DRIVE WEDGES INTO CHRISTIAN AREA AND SO DISADVANTAGE MILITIAS MILITARILY IN PREPARATION FOR FURTHER ASSAULTS DEEPER INTO MARONITE HEARTLAND. IN ADDITION TO RENDERING MANY FLEEING INHABITANTS HOMELESS AND SOWING SOME PANIC, THERE HAVE BEEN WIDESPREAD ALLEGATIONS THAT SYRIANS MAY NOW, ONCE AND FOR ALL, HAVE DECIDED TO CRUSH MARONITE MILITIAS MILITARILY. THIS WOULD, IF TRUE, REPRESENT A MAJOR CHANGE IN WHAT THE SYRIANS HAVE REPEATEDLY SAID IS SECRET

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THEIR POLICY.

-- FOLLOWING THE EVENTS IN THE NORTH AND PROBABLY AS AN OUTGROWTH OF THEM, THERE HAS BEEN A RESURGENCE OF SYRIAN-MARONITE CLASHES IN BEIRUT, WHICH HAS BEEN REASONABLY QUIET FOR ALMOST THREE WEEKS. THIS COMBINATION OF EVENTS HAS RAISED TENSIONS GREATLY.

-- HOST GOVERNMENTS WILL BE AWARE THAT ISRAELI CONCERN, ATTRIBUTING WORST POSSIBLE MOTIVES TO SYRIANS, HAS MOUNTED OVER RECENT DAYS. ISRAELIS HAVE COMMUNICATED TO US PRIVATELY SUSPICIONS AND CONCERNS THAT SITUATION COULD EVOLVE TO POINT WHERE THEY WOULD FEEL COMPELLED TO BECOME MORE INVOLVED THAN THEY ARE NOW. INGREDIENTS, THEREFORE, ARE ALL PRESENT FOR POTENTIAL WIDENING OF CONFLICT.

-- USG IS IN CLOSE CONTACT REGARDING SITUATION NOT ONLY WITH LEBANESE BUT WITH SYRIAN AND ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS. WE HAVE INFORMED SYRIANS URGENTLY OF OUR VIEW OF THE DANGER OF THE SITUATION AND IMPRESSED UPON SYRIANS OUR JUDGMENT THAT ALL POSSIBLE SHOULD BE DONE TO DEFUSE

SITUATION. WE HAVE EXPRESSED OUR VIEW THAT SYRIA, WHILE NOT SOLELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TENSE SITUATION IN LEBANON, SHOULD IN A CREDIBLE WAY ALLAY GROWING SUSPICIONS IN VARIOUS QUARTERS THAT IT INTENDS TO DOMINATE LEBANON. IF ITS OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON REMAIN TO SUPPORT THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT'S UNIFYING POLICIES AND PROVIDE SECURITY UNTIL THE GOL IS ABLE TO ASSUME THIS FUNCTION, THEN IT SHOULD TAKE STEPS THAT CONVINCE THE DOUBTERS. WITH ALL GOVERNMENTS, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO URGE THAT THEY EXERCISE RESTRAINT AND USE WHAT INFLUENCE THEY HAVE TO HALT MILITARY CONFRONTATIONS AND PERMIT THE SARKIS GOVERNMENT TO UNDERTAKE POLITICAL EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE FIGHTING.

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-- WE ARE SEEKING COOPERATION AND SUPPORT FOR THESE ACTIONS FROM HOST GOVERNMENTS. WE BELIEVE WE SHARE A DEEP INTEREST IN FORESTALLING A WIDER CONFLICT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ASSURING THAT THE CLIMATE IN THE REGION BEFORE AND DURING THE FORTHCOMING TALKS ON MIDDLE EAST PEACE AT CAMP DAVID DOES NOT DISTRACT THE PARTICIPANTS FROM THE PROGRESS WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE. WE BELIEVE HOST GOVERNMENT COULD MAKE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION AT THIS TIME THROUGH APPROPRIATE APPROACH TO THE SARG, EXPRESSING CONCERN RE LEBANON AND ASKING SYRIA TO MAKE ALL-OUT MAJOR EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT CEASEFIRE. WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING HOST GOVERNMENT'S APPRAISAL OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS, IF POSSIBLE FOLLOWING DISCUSSION OF MATTER WITH SARG AUTHORITIES. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INSTRUCTIONS, MEETINGS, POLITICAL SITUATION, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE221467
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: WNHOWELL:PDW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780355-0193
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978083/aaaaacaz.tel
Line Count: 150
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: c919a45c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1637903
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANON SITUATION
TAGS: PEPR, MOPS, PINS, LE, SY, IS
To: LONDON PARIS MULTIPLE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c919a45c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014